

REMARKS

In the instant Office Action the Examiner has rejected Claim 9 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Additionally, the Examiner has rejected Claims 1-10 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable, primarily on the combination of Burbage et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,350,733) and Argy (U.S. Patent No. 4,417,603).

As discussed below, Applicant submits that the amendments to the claims overcome the Examiner's obviousness rejection and that all of the pending claims (Nos. 1-10) are allowable.

The 35 U.S.C. §112 Rejection

The Examiner rejected Claim 9 on the grounds there was a lack of antecedent basis for the claim language "the columns". Applicant has amended Claim 9 to provide the antecedent basis and therefore respectfully submits that this rejection has been rendered moot.

The 35 U.S.C. §103 Rejections

The Examiner rejected independent Claim 1 as well as dependent Claims 3, 5 and 7 based upon the combination of Burbage et al. and Argy.

In the third paragraph of the Office Action the Examiner maintains the position that the facility 12 described in Burbage corresponds to the "first vessel" in claim 1 and that the barge 14 corresponds to the "second vessel" in said claim. Claim 1 now recites that the first and second vessel are "floating vessels". Additionally, in the seventh paragraph of the Office Action the Examiner has also argued that in Burbage the barge 14 is "engagable" with the shuttle tanker 40, insofar that it can be moored thereto. In order

to distinguish claim 1 of the present invention from this arrangement, claim 1 has been amended to indicate that the semi-submersible dock has variable buoyancy means to alter the draft of the dock "to enable engagement of the dock with the underside of the keel of the second vessel". This amendment makes it clear that Applicant's invention involves the actual engagement between the dock structure and the vessel and not the mere mooring of two vessels as shown in Burbage.

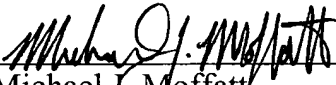
Applicant respectfully submits that Claim 1 as currently amended is allowable. Similarly, claims 2-10, which depend either directly or indirectly are similarly allowable.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that the application is in condition for the issuance of a Notice of Allowance.

If any fees are due, please charge our Deposited Account No. 21-0800.

Respectfully submitted,

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